



Town of Brunswick, Maine

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE

85 UNION STREET, BRUNSWICK, ME 04011

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE

AGENDA BRUNSWICK TOWN HALL

85 UNION STREET

ROOM 206

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THIS MEETING IN PERSON OR VIEW THE MEETING VIA ZOOM

HOW TO WATCH AND COMMENT VIA ZOOM

<https://www.brunswickme.org/313/Brunswick-Cable-TV3>

COMMENTS ARE ALLOWED DURING THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS, AND ON OTHER ITEMS AND MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR. PUBLIC COMMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED THROUGH THE ZOOM PLATFORM BY "RAISING YOUR HAND" AND BEING ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE HOST OR BY ENTERING QUESTIONS IN THE Q&A CHAT.

ALL VOTES TO BE TAKEN VIA ROLL CALL

- 1. Roll Call of Members**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Revisions to Assigned Subcommittee Policy Areas**
- 4. Housing Objectives and Action Items (Draft)**
- 5. Natural Resource Community Expert Identification**
- 6. Future Meeting Dates**
 - a. September 23, 2021 (Subcommittee A Natural Resources Workshop)
 - b. October 5, 2021 (Full Steering Committee)
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Adjourn**

2008 Comprehensive Plan Update - Action Review

Action #	Action	Subcommittee Recommendation	Notes
Policy Area 5: Encourage a Diversity of Housing Types in the Designated Growth Area and Facilitate the Preservation and Development of Affordable and Workforce Housing			
Key Objective 1	Support the transition of BNAS associated housing to meet the workforce and affordable housing needs of the community.		
Key Action 1	Research federal regulations relating to affordable housing of decommissioned Navy housing and position Town to ensure the availability and affordability of those units.	Ok to eliminate.	
Key Action 2	Create zoning for BNAS property that allows for increased density and flexibility to promote private development of affordable and workforce housing.	Update zoning to implement additional incentives and requirements for affordable and workforce housing.	Can property be designated as a general TIF and Affordable Housing TIF?
Key Objective 2	Preserve the current stock of affordable and rental housing.		
Key Action 1	Actively pursue state and federal housing subsidy programs, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) housing rehabilitation funds, Federal Home Loan Bank subsidies, and Maine State Housing Authority Home Rehabilitation program funds. Explore reuse of no-longer needed municipal and school facilities as sites for redevelopment.	Carry over to new update. Emphasize identifying municipal properties. Work with Department of Economic Development to identify and obtain additional funding.	
Action 2	Partner with funders where possible to encourage owner-occupied multi-unit housing.	Carry over to new update. Discuss appropriateness of regulations for short term rentals (STRs).	Is "owner-occupied" necessary?
Key Objective 3	Create an environment that supports the development of new affordable housing by both the public and private sectors.		
Key Action 1	Allow denser development in the Growth Area by drafting and adopting zoning ordinance revisions to permit increased housing density at all price levels. This same action appears in Policy 3, Objective 2, Action 1, serving both objectives.	Carry objective forward, but zoning ordinance revisions are already in place due to ZORC. Should be encouraging, not just allowing, denser development.	
Additional Objective 4	Facilitate the development of affordable housing (KEEP AND MAKE KEY OBJECTIVE).		
Action 1	Use the new Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program to encourage suitable projects.	Combine with Key Objective 1, Key Action 2	
Action 2	Identify partners to work collaboratively with the Town on housing projects that are focused on rental apartments, moderately priced workforce housing, and low to moderate-income elderly housing.		

Action 3	Support development of workforce housing for Town employees.		
Additional Objective 5	Educate the public about housing issues.		
Action 1	Support informational and educational efforts of the Mid Coast Community Housing Coalition.	Replace with "Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative and any other non-profits."	
Action 2	Prepare education materials and programs that help residents visualize denser development patterns.	Ok to eliminate.	Can be achieved through different methods.
Action 3	Distribute education and program materials with property tax bills.		Already an ongoing activity.
Performance Targets			
1	At least 5% of new housing units constructed in each five-year period (2010-2015, 2015-2020, etc.) will be affordable to lower income households with incomes of less than 80% of the median area-wide household income.	Performance targets will either be removed from the update or completed at a later date.	
2	At least 10% of new housing units constructed in each five-year period (2010-2015, 2015-2020, etc.) will be affordable to moderate income households with incomes of less than 150% of the median area-wide household income.		
3	The ratio of the median single-family home sales price to the median household income (or affordability index) will be lower in 2015 than it is today and will continue to decrease.		
4	Not more than 80% of new housing units constructed in each five-year period (2010-2015, 2015-2020, etc.) will be single-family homes.		
5	At least 20% of new housing units constructed in each five-year period (2010-2015, 2015-2020, etc.) will be rental housing.		
6	The number of affordable and rental housing units available will not decrease below the number available in 2005.		

Staff DRAFT Housing Objectives and Actions (8-31-2021):

Objective 1: Facilitate the development of affordable and workforce housing within the Growth Area through partnerships with private and non-profit agencies.

- Proposed Action: Identify locations to establish Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts.
- Proposed Action: Support the development of workforce housing for Town employees.

Objective 2: Research impediments to the development of affordable and workforce housing and implement incentives and requirements to ensure its development within Growth Area.

- Proposed Action: Update zoning to implement additional incentives and requirements for affordable and workforce housing.
- Proposed Action: Research and implement best practices for encouraging development densities beyond existing zoning standards for specific affordable and workforce housing projects.

Objective 3: Identify funding sources and implementation strategies to preserve and enhance the current stock of affordable and rental housing.

- Proposed Action: Research impact of short-term rentals (STRs) on the current affordable and rental housing stock.
- Proposed Action: Identify funding opportunities to increase energy efficiency in the Town's existing affordable and rental housing stock.
- Proposed Action: Support BHA recruitment and retention programs for landlords willing to accept housing vouchers.

Objective 4: Evaluate existing municipal properties for potential reuse as affordable and workforce housing.

- Proposed Action: Inventory and maintain an updated database of all Town-owned properties
- Proposed Action: Review existing and/or conduct new feasibility studies for the adaptive reuse of municipal properties.

Objective 5: Establish funding methods for a dedicated fund for the Town to identify and acquire properties suitable for affordable and workforce housing.

- Proposed Action: Identify any superfluous municipal properties that can be sold.
- Proposed Action: Identify properties within the Growth Area that may be best suited for

affordable and workforce housing. Monitor for opportunities to purchase such properties.

Objective 6: Participate in regional and state efforts to increase housing diversity and affordability.

- Proposed Action: Advocate for State Legislation.
- Proposed Action: Monitor State and Federal Legislation.
- Proposed Action: Establish an Affordable Housing Committee.

Objective 7: Ensure diversity in housing type and the application of universal design principles.

- Proposed Action: Ensure regulations and standards accommodate multi-generational households.
- Proposed Action: Research and implement best practices for encouraging or requiring multi-family rental dwelling units within certain Growth Area Zoning Districts.
- Proposed Action: Explore the feasibility of tiny home developments/neighborhoods as affordable housing.

Objective 8: Maintain and update a database of key housing statistics to identify trends and their potential impact on the Town.

- Proposed Action: Update Comprehensive Plan Housing Inventory Annually and Report to Town Council and other interested parties.

Housing Workshop with Community Experts

Guests: Alexander Bessey, The Gathering Place
Melissa Fochesato, Mid Coast Hospital
John Hodge, Brunswick Housing Authority
Dave Holman, RE/MAX Riverside
Jane Millett, RE/MAX Riverside, Former Town Councilor
Carol O'Donnell, Southern Midcoast Housing Collaborative
Sue Spann, RE/MAX Riverside

Concerns:

- Homelessness and those near homelessness.
 - o No room in nearby shelters.
- Rent increases.
- Employers are having problems hiring employees due to lack of housing.
- Opposition from local residents to BHA projects. Many support the concept, but not proposed locations.
- Federal policy has shifted from building housing to incentivizing private developers.
 - o Rent increases mean voucher fund cannot cover as many households.
 - o Federal government fair market rents lag behind current rental rates.
- Cost of building does not provide a reasonable return on investments in affordable and workforce housing.
 - o Materials, labor, supply chain issues.
- Affordable housing is a regional/state issue, but Towns have not received much support.
- Subsidized housing vouchers are being returned.
- Increased property taxes threaten overall affordability.
- End of Federal Rent Moratorium program.
 - o 40 million Americans at risk.
- Length of time from housing project conception to completion is measured in years.
- Lack of "real" affordable housing developers in the State.
- Affordable Housing Density Bonus in Zoning Ordinance is not utilized.
- Town lacks funding to purchase properties to be used for housing.
 - o Establish a revolving loan fund (by using federal funds such as CDBG)

Recommendations/Ideas for Consideration:

- Do "carrot" incentives need to be supplemented with regulatory "sticks?"
- Pass local resolution encouraging the State to implement regulations requiring affordable housing in communities (see California, Illinois, Massachusetts, etc.).
- Tiny homes on a temporary basis for homeless.
- Reevaluate allowable densities in certain areas.
- Research community-based land trusts.
- Establish partnerships:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Track number of accessory dwelling units.
- One-or two-year waiver of property taxes for affordable housing.
- “Reverse impact fee” that pays developers for including affordable housing.
- Research and potentially implement an Affordable Housing TIF.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant private structures.
- A lack of affordable housing in Brunswick is not a new problem.

Miscellaneous:

- Define the “layers of affordability” (affordable/workforce, subsidized, and market rate housing).
- BHA is attempting to build 38 units in Topsham, but 18-24 months to completion.
- BHA has a “landlord retention program” and is trying to encourage/incentivize more landlords to accept vouchers.
- Some realtors do not even have to post rental units for lease anymore.
- Some realtors have never seen such a demand for housing, especially in comparison to the lack of supply.
- Many Brunswick Landing homes (Beaver Pond, Chickadee, etc.) are selling to retirees. They are considered “affordable” in comparison to existing sales prices, but they are not subsidized.
- Brunswick Landing is an area that can provide essential services to no-to-low-income residents.
- Outer Pleasant Street and Old Portland Road may present opportunities for new housing.

Data:

- BHA owns and manages 327 housing units.
 - BHA has a 378-household waitlist.
- BHA has budget authority for 453 vouchers (306 vouchers currently in use due higher subsidy per family because of higher rents).
 - Centralized statewide waitlist has approximately 12,000 households.
- In the last few years, approximately 50% of subsidized housing vouchers are being returned because recipients cannot locate a rental unit within 120 days.
- Government determined subsidized fair market rent rate in Brunswick for 2-bedroom units is \$1,210. Actual rents are \$1500 and up. BHA can set payment standards up to 110% of fair market rate.

Projects worth Noting:

- Mariners’ Landing (not subsidized but most affordable market rate units at the time)

